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## Social and Emotional Competency of Beginning Teachers

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### Abstract

This study focused on exploring the social and emotional competencies scores of beginning teachers' of an Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia. Seventy eight beginning teachers' were surveyed using the Emotional Social Competency Inventory (ESCI). Data were collected during the beginning teachers' convocation. Results emphasized that the mean score of personal and social competency were above average: social-awareness ( $M=3.86$ ), self-management ( $M=3.74$ ), self-awareness ( $M=3.68$ ) and relationship management ( $M=3.67$ ). There is a positive correlation ( $r = .834$ ,  $p < .05$ ) between personal and social competencies of beginning teachers. To face the challenges in today's school environment, personal and social competencies need to be strengthened or enhanced to be successful in one's career.

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Keywords : emotional competency ; social competency and beginning teacher

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### 1. Introduction

Malaysia's education system is closely guided by own National Philosophy Of Education (NPE). This is an important document for teachers and pupils to study, to understand, to heed and to follow closely in Malaysia. Teachers need to realize successfully the aims and aspirations of NPE by having profound understanding on it. It is the main reference in all education planning and activities since its official proclamation in 1988. The statement of the NPE are explicitly stated as :

“Education in Malaysia is an on going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, in order to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically, balanced and harmoniously, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well being to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family society and the nation at large (Curriculum Development Centre, 1990).

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As can be seen in the NPE, besides intellectual, physical and spiritual development, emotional development of the child is also important. This emotional concept has always been sidelined as our education system and the society placed great emphasis on obtaining good results.

Balanced individuals are those that have a balance in their physical, emotional, spiritually and social development. Meanwhile the spiritual and emotional aspects cover elements such as belief in God, embrace religious faith, spiritual stability, emotional intelligence, appreciation of moral value and norms of society, good behavior, loyalty and willing to sacrifice for the people and the country. Following this positive attitude which are inculcated in beginning teachers, they enjoy spiritual peacefulness and emotionally ever ready to face challenges in life.

Goleman (1998,2001) concluded that the major qualities differentiating successful from unsuccessful are competencies underlying Emotional Intelligence (EI) and emotional competencies are learned capabilities based on EI, that result in outstanding performance at work (Opengart, 2007).

**Emotional intelligence (EI)**, is defined as the ability, capacity, skill, an self-perceived ability to identify, assess and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of group (Serrat, 2009). However, according to Goleman (1998) EI refers to the abilities to recognise and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others. Tait (2008) said that emotional intelligence is a set of social and personal competencies that assist people in managing their internal states and their interactions with others. According to Cherniss (2000), emotional competence (EC) refer to the personal and social competencies that lead to superior performance on the world of work and EC are linked to EI. This is supported by Oberst (2009) that EC are those competencies that are developed on the base of EI. Goleman (2008) claimed that EC are not innate talents, but learned capabilities to achieve outstanding performance and the four major EI domains are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management..

**Social intelligence (SI)** is defined as the ability to understand others, manage people, and act wisely in social contexts (Seal, Naumann, Scott & Davis, 2010). Freedman (2007) discussed that Goleman explained social intelligence is the interpersonal part of emotional intelligence. According to Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) SI skills include the empathy, attunement, organizational awareness, influence, developing others, inspiration and teamwork which ones need improvement. Oberst (2009) added that social competence (SC) has been defined as "the possession and use of the ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaviour to achieve social tasks and outcomes valued in the host context and culture. Goleman (2001) claimed that according to Thorndike SI is the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls to act wisely in human relations.

**Beginning teachers**, are referred to early career teachers Burris & Keller (2008). More commonly, today is the term induction-year teacher, indicating the early years are a process of transforming from program graduate to member of a profession (Burris & Keller, 2001).

Tait (2008) claimed that teaching is one of the few professions where beginning teachers have as much responsibility as their experienced colleagues. They too carry full teaching loads and handle them as their experienced colleagues. When beginning teachers face heavy work load, they feel challenged and stressful, leaving the beginning teachers in frustration. Furthermore, they face more difficult subject combinations and more challenging students to manage Tait (2008). In addition to that, these beginning teachers will appear incompetent or poorly prepared if they seek for assistance. Tait (2008) added that , the key to helping beginning teachers to be more capable, more confident , and more committed over the long term are personal efficacy and emotional

competencies. According to Beland (2007), social and emotional learning is the process by which people develop the skills to recognize and manage emotions, form positive relationship, solve problem, become motivated to accomplish a goal, make responsible decisions, and avoid risky behavior.

## **2. Background**

Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG) is an institute of teacher education training future teachers for primary school level under the Ministry of Education. IPG is in charge of training future teachers for the Bachelor's Degree in Education with Hons (PISMP) for five and half years ( one and half years as foundation program and four years as degree students). This PISMP is the pioneer degree program being carried out in twenty seven IPGs in Malaysia. Prior to this only diploma and certificates were awarded.

The mission of IPG is to produce balanced teachers encompassing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects who will later become valuable national human resources with capacity of social and emotional competency qualities. These qualities enhances the capability of beginning teachers to face the challenges in their schools.

Beginning teachers face a series of sudden and dramatic changes as they make the transition from preservice student to first-year teacher. Research in general education documents the myriad challenges that many beginning teachers may face, including the following: heavy teaching loads, multiple preparations, the least “desirable” classes, extracurricular duties, few instructional resources, little collegial support, discipline issues, professional isolation, inadequate salaries, high parent expectations, poor administrative support, unfamiliarity with routines and procedures, and a mismatch between their expectations of teaching and the realities of the classroom.

In examining what a student needs in order to be a quality teacher and able to face the challenges, one needs to look at other factors besides academic. Beginning teachers in Malaysia appear to know the subject content for their teaching assignment because they have passed the centralized examination. They have completed a successful internship (classroom experience) for three semesters (6,7 and 8) and school based experience from semester 1 to 5 in government primary schools. They know some of the challenges they will face in the schools. The question is are they emotionally and socially prepared? The learning outcome of this PISMP program are gaining knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, practical skills, transferability skills and appreciation and practice of values. Burris (2008) claimed that as a result of the growing importance placed on the early career experiences of teachers, variety of research has been focused towards problems related to teacher retention and challenges.

According to Nelson and Low (2003) emotional intelligence is the single most important influencing variable in personal achievement, career success, leadership and life satisfaction. They feel that an emotionally fit person should be able to identify, understand, experience, and express human emotions in a healthy and productive ways (Justice & Espinoza, 2004). Emotional competence, may be the key to helping beginning teachers become more capable, more confident, and more committed to teaching over the long term. Emotional intelligence is a set of social and personal competencies that assist people in managing their internal states and their interactions with others. As teaching is a social undertaking by nature and emotional intelligence is an important factor in teacher success. Cherniss (2000) suggests that emotional intelligence “provides the bedrock” for the personal and social competencies that lead to superior performance on the job (Tait, 2008).

### 3. Objective of the study

Given the importance of emotional intelligence of beginning teachers, the present study examined the level of emotional and social competencies of beginning teachers. It is an effort to identify their competence of; (i) self-awareness, (ii) self-management, (iii) social awareness and (iv) relationship management. The result of this study will highlight the cluster of personal and social competencies that enhance career success. The second objective is to examine the relationship between personal and social competence of beginning teachers. The areas of competencies being examined are clustered as: self-awareness, self- management as personal competencies whereby social awareness, relationship management as social competencies.

### 4. Research Question

The research questions investigated were :

Research question 1: What is the level of personal and social competencies of beginning teachers' of each domain :

- 1.1 self-awareness
- 1.2 self management
- 1.3 social awareness
- 1.4 relationship management

Research question 2: What is the level of emotional and social competencies of beginning teachers in terms of:

- 2.1 personal competency
- 2.2 social competency?

Research question 3: Is there a significant relationship between personal and social competencies of beginning teachers?

### 5. Methodology

#### *Participants*

Seventy eight beginning teachers participated in the study. The sample included 40 male and 38 female beginning teachers representing the pioneer batch of teachers from the PISMP program with bachelor's of education degree (B.Ed). They are now teaching at government aided primary schools throughout Malaysia. Their age range from 23 to 25 years with three month's teaching experience after graduation. The self-rated questionnaire was distributed to all of them during the convocation's registration and were returned one day later.

### Instrument

The instrument used in this study was Emotional and Social Competency Inventory version 3: short (ESCI, 2007) designed by Goleman and Boyatzis (2007). The instrument is made up of 68 items with responses based on 5-point likert scale (from 1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= consistently). A “not applicable” category was also provided but is taken as non-response as mentioned in scoring the ESCI.

This instrument has been validated in Malaysian context. The cronbach alpha was .934. Participants are asked to rate the degree to which they feel confident in their ability to accomplish each item. The questionnaire measuring 12 emotional and social competencies score were organized into four clusters as shown in the table below:

**Table 1**  
**Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI), Goleman and Boyatzis (2007)**

<i>Clusters of EI</i>	<i>Competencies</i>
<b>Personal competency</b>	
Self-awareness	Emotional selfawareness
Self-management	Achievement orientation, adaptability, emotional self-control, positive outlook
<b>Social competency</b>	
Social awareness	Empathy, organizational awareness
Relationship management	Conflict management, coach & mentor, influence, inspirational leadership, teamwork.

## 6. Results

ESCI was used to obtain participant's social and emotional competencies scores. The mean ESCI score was 3.76 for social competency and 3.70 for personal competency.

**Table 2: Four clusters of EI**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
selfaware	78	2.33	5.00	3.6774	.57065
selfmgmt	78	2.67	5.00	3.7393	.47386
socaware	78	2.80	5.00	3.8590	.51331
relation	78	2.92	4.71	3.6658	.40205
Valid N (listwise)	78				

**Table 3: Total of personal and social competency**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
personalcom	78	2.67	4.92	3.7083	.48793
socialcom	78	2.87	4.85	3.7624	.43303
Valid N (listwise)	78				

Descriptive statistical procedures were used to analyze the data for research question 1 and 2. The mean and standard deviation for each cluster of competency are presented in Table 2. Social awareness showed  $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = .51$ ,

followed by self management  $M = 3.74$ ,  $Sd = .47$ , then self awareness  $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = .57$  and relationship management  $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = .40$ . From Table 3, the total competencies showed that the mean for social competency is ( $M=3.76$ ) and the mean for personal competency is ( $M=3.70$ ). The mean for social competency is slightly higher than personal competency, the difference of .06 only. Referring to research question 2 the beginning teachers have about equal level of social and personal competencies.

For research question 3, there is a significant positive relationship exist between personal and social competency of beginning teachers ( $r = .834$ ,  $p < .05$ ) indicating that higher personal competency are associated with higher social competency as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**Correlations between personal competency and social competency**

		personalcom	socialcom
Personalcom	Pearson Correlation	1	.834(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	78	78
Socialcom	Pearson Correlation	.834(**)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	78	78

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

## 7. Discussion

The mean of ESCI scores answered the research question 1 and 2. The result showed that the social awareness cluster is the highest, followed by self management, self awareness and relationship management. In the cluster of social awareness, organizational awareness competencies showed  $M=3.93$  and empathy  $M=3.79$ . These beginning teachers possess high mean of social awareness competency which is critical for superior job performance and interactions with people. This is supported by Cherniss (2000) that empathy is important aspect of emotional intelligence, as it contributes to occupational success and people who identify others' emotions were more successful in their work and social lives.

In the cluster of self management, among the competencies of achievement orientation, adaptability, emotional self-control and positive outlook, the mean ( $M=3.97$ ) of positive outlook was the highest. This showed that the beginning teachers are taking challenges positively and always strive to improve performance to be successful in workplace. Self management is a cluster of emotional competency and according to Kaufhold et al (2005) said that Carolyn Saari, who proposed the Theory of Emotional Competence emphasized that emotional competency is an essential piece of social maturity to the value of interpersonal relationship.

The mean for self awareness cluster showed  $M=3.68$ , which showed that the beginning teachers have high mean in self awareness. This quality enables beginning teachers seek out feedback, learn from their mistakes and know

where to improve their performance. Beland (2007) supported that self awareness includes skills in recognizing own emotions and cultivating strengths and positive qualities.

Eventhough relationship management cluster showed the least mean ( $M = 3.67$ ) among the four but the score indicate high as mininum score is 2.92 and maximum score is 4.71 for relationship management. The result concludes that the beginning teachers have essential social skill as relationship management is a cluster of social competence.

Referring to reseach question 2 the the total score of personal and social of beginning teachers showed about the same level of social and personal competencies . Thus, this indicated that the beginning teachers have balanced level of social and personal competencies.

Looking at research question 3, higher personal competency was linked to higher social competency of beginning teachers. So, beginning teachers who are self competent are also socially competent. The emotional intelligence of personal and social competencies are important for beginning teachers to face the challenges in today's school environment. Cherniss.et al (2006) claimed that almost two thirds of the competencies linked to higher performance in the workplace are emotional or social qualities ( Oberst.et al, 2009). Oberst.et al (2009) added that these competencies are very important in today's working environment, as there is increasing competitive pressure and constant change.

Two studies found positive relationships between the ability to manage emotions and the quality of social interactions (Lopes.et al, 2003). According to Lopes. et al (2003) emotional competencies are thought to be important for social interaction because emotions serve communicative and social functions, conveying information about people's thoughts and intentions, and coordinating social encounters. Positive emotionality is associated with sociability. Lopes. et al (2003) claims that there is converging evidence from other lines of research that emotional competencies are associated with social adaptation. A large number of studies with children suggest that the capacity to decode, understand, and regulate emotions is associated with social and emotional adaptation.



## Implications and Conclusions

This study showed a positive relationship between emotional competency and social competency of beginning teachers. From the score of mean of each cluster of ESCI, we can conclude that these beginning teachers possess strong personal and social competencies. Opengart (2007) concluded that research indicated the Emotional Intelligence skills that are most valued for workplace and leadership success, where leadership, self-awareness, social awareness or empathy, self-management and mood regulation are included. This study focused on small sample of beginning teachers who graduated from one of the Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia, thus the results of this study cannot be generalized in Malaysia. It would be interesting to replicate this study with a larger sample of beginning teachers from all the twenty seven institutes in Malaysia. Further investigation maybe needed to explore differences that may exist between geographic location, duration of teaching experience and other characteristics.

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